

“Beep! Beep! Beep!”

My alarm went off and I woke up with the start. I looked at the time, 8:25. Five minutes to be out of the door for the bus. I cursed as I hurriedly threw shirt and pants and ran downstairs. I grabbed a slice of toast and was about to leave as I realized I didn't have my homework. I mumbled as I grabbed my homework on the table right above where my cocker spaniel was resting. I sidestepped Buster, my dog, until I felt a sharp tug on my paper and the sound of tearing. Horrified, I sharply turned, spinning on my heel; only to see Buster chomping up last night's math homework. Classic. Life was *just* beautiful.

“Honk!” the bus groaned.

I looked at my feet in desperation, and made the quick decision. I blasted onto the school bus and right next to my friend AJ, quickly retelling the entire screenplay of what had just happened this morning, with a plea for last night's math homework.

“Please AJ? I swear to god I'll help you next time you're in a ditch!”

“Jesus Christ. Okay, okay I'll help you....only this time though.” he sighed.

I quickly pulled out my red spiral math notebook, and quickly copied his answers down before the bus reached school. I walked into school, and this morning became a faded memory. First, second, and third period passed in a blink of an eye, as I walked into fourth period. Math. I sat down, and began chatting with AJ and my friend Mikaela. I opened up my math notebook, as our teacher walked around to grade our papers. Mrs. Calvari walked behind us, clipboard in one arm and a pen in her opposite hand. She stopped behind us, and looked closer at our papers. As cliché as it sounds, tiny beads of sweat ran down my forehead.

“AJ.....Emerson.. Why do both of you have the exact same work and the exact same answers that are right and wrong? Homework is practice, guys. If you don't do homework, you're never going to learn, and you're never going to ace your tests! Both of you, see me at the end of class!”

Mikaela smirked, as she flipped through her notes. ‘Which one of you cheated?’

“Me. I did. God, AJ I'm so sorry. I'll tell Mrs. Calvari at the end of class. You won't be held responsible.’ I whispered.

“It's 'kay Emerson. Now be quiet, Mrs. Calvari is talking. If we get caught doing something bad again, we're going to land ourselves a detention. The class went on undisturbed, and the bell rang as everyone rose up to leave.

“Ah, Emerson and AJ. Care to explain what that little homework situation was?” Mrs. Calvari inquired.

“Well, Mrs. Calvari, its simple. The reason I had to copy AJ's work is because..... my dog ate my homework.”

Mrs. Calvari started laughing and dismissed AJ, finally turning to me.

“C'mon Emerson, you can do better *than that*.’ she said, in between her giggles at the absurdity of it all. I protested against this, irritated that she didn't believe me. Fine, thinking to myself, Mrs. Calvari, I'll give you *exactly* what you want.

“You're absolutely right, Mrs. Calvari. In fact, the reason I did not pass my own, original work today was because it was stolen by the Arabian Secret Service.”

The giggles died as Ms. Calvari stared at me.

“Really? Care to elaborate Emerson?”

“Of course, Mrs. Calvari. Wouldn’t want to keep you hanging. It was last summer, and we were vacationing in Dubai. It was in the hot desert, and I stepped out of our summer villa with the intent to buy some street food. I walked into one of the stalls, speaking to the vendor in broken arabic to buy some shawarma and just had recieved the hot food as I noticed a small, scrawny boy. He was panting hard, carrying a rusty brown package and was running hard until he crashed into me, dropping on the ground. I picked up his package to hand to him, only to hear a sharp noise that rang through my eardrums as a bullet flew past my ear. I immediately broke out into a run, following the small boy into a abandoned house. He and I crouched behind some pots, waiting for an ambush to happen as I slowly pulled out what was in the package.”

“What!”

I whisper-shouted as I found that the only thing in the package was a piece of notebook paper, which has a series of numbers and digits on it.

“What is on this paper that is so important?” I asked the boy in a somewhat comprehensible arabic to the boy. He whispered very slowly, as his hazel eyes cast downward and his expression grew quite solemn.

“It is of course, the stolen nuclear codes from the President. I was the one no one was ever supposed to notice.... The one we all thought would be ignored. Unluckily, the Arabian Secret Service had known about me all along.”

To me, the boy looked about 11 or 12 years old, but he turned out to be 16. I was blown away, and terrified. I mean, how could this happen? I was only here in Dubai for vacation, and I only went outside for some street food! My mind was racing, thinking about how much my life would

be messed up if I was caught in the possession of the nuclear codes. The boy pleaded with me, begging me to not hand the codes over, winning me over with his argument of all the destructions the government would cause if they had possession of nuclear arms. I mean, those things were no joke! I tucked the notebook paper... in a location *best* left undescribed I the calmly walked past the officers and into our house. It's been two years since that incident. In fact, I nearly forgot!"

"Alright Emerson, but how in the world does that relate to you cheating on your homework?"

"Please wait, Mrs. Calvari I will explain in a second." I beckoned slowly with my hands, as I jumped back into my story I was, might I say myself, immaculately weaving.

"The reason I'm telling this story is because this morning, I heard three, exactly three sharp knocks on my door. I was the only one in the house, as my father is away on a business trip to Malta at the moment. My mother was on her daily morning walks, when she prepares her mind and mediates before the day. I opened the door, expecting it to be my mother, still groggy only to see two men and a woman in suits. The woman was wearing a headscarf that left only her eyes to be shown, eyes that flashed of danger. Immediately I was tense but I tried to stay calm and not let anything show, lest they suspected something.

"Hi, How can I help you?" I asked nervously. The lady extended a long finger at the counter, a notebook paper that lay face down.

“ My math homework? I asked, genuinely confused, only to see the one of the men with shoulder length hair laugh.”

“ That is no homework, Miss. Do not expect us to be fooled by your silly act. By any chance, were you in Dubai two years ago? “ he replied, in accented english with a hint of malice in his tone. “

“What? “ I retorted, only to be pushed on the ground roughly by the woman as one of the men jumped in the car and the other snatched my math homework and quickly put it inside his briefcase. The women looked at me as her eyebrow raised.

“This is a warning, Emerson. Do not cross us again” As she closed the door and sped off in the car.

“So, Mrs. Calvari, this exactly is why I did not have my math homework today, and used AJ’s instead.” I offered, slightly smirking as Mrs. Calvari looked shocked. That is, until the corner of her mouth turned up and she said “ C’mon Emerson, you can do better *than that*” I threw my hands in exasperation, my engine renewed.

“ You’re absolutely right, Mrs. Calvari, I was only pulling your leg. The truth, the reason why I didn’t have my homework done today is because of my medical condition.

“Oh, do we need to get you to the nurse, Emerson?’ Mrs. Calvari inquired, eyebrows raised in her disbelief. Inside, I smirked, readily eager to make up another excuse, as I myself was annoyed that she wouldn’t believe me.

“No, not at all. I’ve taken my meds this morning...after my little fiasco. I have a rare condition called Fainting Goat Symptom named fondly because of the Fainting Goats of Ohio. Out of nowhere, my nerves freeze up and I faint for a few seconds. It’s been a condition I’ve had since

day one, and on this particular morning, I woke up with a slight headache. I proceeded to freshen up and change for the school day, when I slowly tiptoed downstairs to grab a quick breakfast. I took out a organic bagel that my father brought back from London, and spread goat cheese on it, when I decided to get some coffee and proceeded to brew some on my Keurig, enjoying the chirping of the birds and exquisite nature around me, when I set my coffee near my math homework, until suddenly everything went black.

“ Everything, went black Emerson? That’s not good.” Mrs. Calvari sounded slightly worried, but added a hint of disbelief in her tone.

“ Yes.” I nodded continuing with my story.

“ I fell, as I fainted, and I hit the coffee, which, of course, unfortunately knocked the coffee out of my hand and spilled all over the paper, drenching it completely, turning the paper into a soggy, brown mess that distinctly smelled of Starbucks Mocha Coffee ™.

“Oh no! So, that’s the reason your homework wasn’t passed in today?” Mrs. Calvari cried.

“Yes. I didn’t have enough time to redo my homework so I came to school with AJ’s work. “ I said, looking downcast and trying to be as pitiful as I can.

“Mrs. Calvari burst out laughing, until her eyes turned to a more serious tone as she inquired for the truth.

“Okay, but in all seriousness, Mrs. Calvari, my dog Buster *did* eat my homework. I know it sounds fake, but it really did happen. I know how unrealistic it sounds, but he did and I asked AJ to let me cheat off his homework just this once, because I didn’t want to get points off you see as

I'm already getting points off and I'm struggling to keep this grade right now and yeah." I said in one big breath, hope in my eyes that maybe Mrs. Calvari wouldn't ruin my grade.

"Alright, Emerson, I believe you." Mrs. Calvari chuckled, ruffling my hair. "I won't change your grade, but you will have lunch detention with me tomorrow as punishment for cheating. Go on now, it's almost time for sixth period." she said, checking the office wall clock positioned on top of the door in her classroom.

I sighed, happy that I was not going to be potentially crucified by my parents if I brought home a bad grade. I mean, a lunch detention was still bad, but it was only middle school. Not gonna lie, those were actually some pretty good excuses. I should turn this into a career, become an author or something. Luckily, I have the entire fifth period to think up my next book.